

“Strong Career and Technology Education in Maryland Means *Learning Today, Earning Tomorrow!*”

Op/Ed

Nancy S. Grasmick

Across the nation during the month of February, Career and Technology Education (CTE) Programs are being celebrated during “CTE Month.” For the third year in a row, Maryland’s education system is ranked number one in the nation by Education Week magazine. Contributing to this ranking are Maryland’s premiere CTE programs of study that prepare students with needed qualifications to enter and succeed in the workforce.

According to the *2010 Maryland’s Workforce Indicators Report* issued by the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, the fastest growing occupations between 2008 and 2018 are in positions related to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math.) This includes careers within the healthcare, aerospace, and cyber-security industries. To keep pace with workforce demand, Maryland offers CTE programs of study in fields such as Information Technology, Networking and Database Management, Engineering, Biomedical Sciences, and Teaching that align with current industry standards. These programs are offered in tandem with updated CTE programs that also align with current industry standards, such as Careers in Cosmetology, Construction Professions, Automotive Technology, and Culinary Arts. CTE importantly offers students industry-recognized credentials and/or college credit that result in advanced standing in the next steps after high school.

Learning Today, Earning Tomorrow is not just a slogan for CTE students, it is a reality. CTE programs do more than provide a pathway to high school graduation and employment for Maryland students. According to the Southern Regional Education Board, students who complete rigorous academics coupled with a CTE program of study earn test scores that equal or exceed “college prep” students and they are more likely to pursue postsecondary education. These CTE graduates typically have higher grade point averages in college and are less likely to drop out in the first year. CTE students are significantly more likely to report that they developed skills in problem-solving, project completion, research, math, communication, and time management during high school. In addition, CTE graduates who possess a related associate degree or credential will earn an average of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 more each year than a person with a humanities or social sciences associate degree – and those with credentials in high-demand fields such as healthcare can average almost \$20,000 more per year.

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Maryland’s system of CTE enrolls nearly 42 percent of high school students each year. Last school year, this translated into over 111,000 students engaged in CTE instruction. Students are attracted to CTE programs because they are goal-focused and relate high school learning to their future careers. There are 48 state-approved programs available that encourage students to explore and prepare for careers that complement their academic interests. CTE programs help students and parents make informed decisions regarding possible education and career options.

The strength and vision of Maryland’s system of Career and Technology Education are a source of pride throughout our state and an integral part of the health of Maryland’s economic future. To find out more information on Maryland Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs and the Maryland Career Development Framework go to MarylandPublicSchools.org and click on “In Focus.”

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